



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Region Three Citizen's Advisory Committee Fish, Wildlife & Parks R3 Headquarters – Bozeman May 14, 2014

Members Present: Dennis Nelson, Cale Christiansen, Jill McMurray, Ken Sinay, Rick Grady, David Gibson, Mike Dailey, Norm Bishop, Bill Mealer, Ray Gross, Mike England, Tom Helm, Harold Johns, Katie Weaver, Pauline Murrill

Public Present: Richard Keigley, Laura Lundquist (Bozeman Daily Chronicle), Glen Hockett, Natalie Storey (Livingston Enterprise), Abby Dennis (Madisonian)

FWP Present: Sam Sheppard, Howard Burt, Bob Harrington, Adam Pankratz, Justin Feddes

Agenda

Welcome remarks, roundtable, public comment

Members report back on issue-card assignment

Requested issues to be addressed by staff:

- **License and Funding Advisory Council recommendations and status**
- **Block management audit**
- **Potential for grizzly delisting**
- **Beaverhead & Big Hole River five year review**
- **Public relations strategy**
- **Montana's Outdoor Legacy Foundation**

Harold Johns: From Skyline Sportsmen - Beaverhead/Big Hole 5 year review – stay as they are. HD 332 – below target population for 12 years. Elk management plan calls for very restrictive cow permits. Skyline thinks FWP is not trying to increase elk populations and that is against policy.

Pat Flowers: Skyline did weigh in, but their arguments weren't persuasive enough. All we can tinker with is the quota, not the structure.

Harold Johns: So that district group is below target population?

Pat Flowers: That group is not, 332 may be. We were dealing with some game damage, so the biologist combined those districts to deal with that game damage.

Harold Johns: Skyline commented on not agreeing with two elk licenses, should only be able to harvest one.

Howard Burt: Regarding B Licenses – we moved from B permits to licenses a couple years ago. We were trying to get to those areas that were over objective with elk, creating landowner tolerance issues with hunters on land. Only about 7% of hunters actually harvest 2 elk. We may be looking at a permit instead of a B license in some areas.

Ken Sinay: This business of allowing bison into Gardiner basin was pretty impressive. I easily saw 500 bison hanging around the entrance to Yankee Jim. This is a huge shift from the 60s, with a trend of people acknowledging and wanting bison. It portends greater wildlife viewing and experience outside the Park. For most of people I deal with, they just assume FWP deals with bison by killing. Did we have anyone claiming bison carcasses under road kill bill?

Sam Sheppard: That is not included in that bill.

Andrea Jones: We did have people claiming other parts of bison.

Ken Sinay: Paradise Valley traffic study, keep in mind, we used to have 55 mph limit at night. Something to consider.

Pat Flowers: Chronicle usually gets everything right, but on the editorial page there was a piece two or three Sundays ago which referenced a letter I signed with Dan Wenk, which doesn't exist. We each sent separate letters.

Jill McMurray: Everyone I talk with agrees with allowing bison to have more land. A lot of people think FWP is doing a great job. Strongest comments are: lack of trust from the perception that FWP is making decisions based on political pressure instead of science. DOL, APHIS etc have too much influence and affects the way FWP manages elk and bison. No one supported the idea of sportsmen dollars going to pay for fences. Granted they are not in brucellosis affected area. Are any funds from the PR Act going to pay for fencing? People are

concerned about cow elk being shot so late in the season. 2014 Proposed Work Plan didn't specify cow or bull being shot.

Dennis Nelson: Quite a few friends have utilized online licensing system, having been out of town or out of the country. Good work on that.

Pauline Murrill: I am the group reservations manager in YNP. Tourists have arrived and love to see bison. I live 11 miles outside Gardiner. We have horses, I come out of the house and there are bison in the pasture with the horses. I worked with FWP many years ago, we were on block management when it first started. It worked very successfully. We knew how to manage the elk and were very successful with taking the elk off. People in the Gardiner area have no respect for anything and anyone, I'm afraid of them. You're liable to get shot. I do a lot of photography, artwork, and I work with the tourists. I like the bison, to a point, but they can be very damaging. Most the reason they come out of the park is they clean out their food source, they need to go some place to eat. It's reasonable to look at how to manage the number of animals that come out of the park. The herd is much too large to graze in the park. Education for special interest groups is key. Reducing speed on hwy has helped. Important to consider what landowners want, sportsman want, tourism wants.

Cale Christiensen: Nothing to add.

Norm Bishop: The consulting I do is usually in literature instead of with other people. I read books like *The Carnivore Way*. If you haven't had any biology in the past 40-50 years, this is a good way to update yourself. (Passed out excerpt- see attachment)

Tom Helm: Initiative 169 Trapping bill. Can FWP take a stand before and/or after it gets on the ballot?

Pat: We cannot.

Ray Gross: Lot of discussion about the Park, Wyoming practices on bison, CWD, brucellosis. Block management – everyone that I know supports the program, except those trying to compete against it. It's too bad some of the press releases have not been better written. From the audit, things that I read, people think conflict between block management and conservation easements is more widespread. Seems like there should be better follow up and explanation. Really a need for a press release to better explain how little the conflict is. Get discounted license prices up to where we're not losing money on that. I don't see why there's a need to

discount the senior citizens licenses. I hope the legislature gets the message that block management is an important program.

Pat Flowers: It's tough for a state agency to be as nimble in those issues as a private agency. The system that we work in makes it challenging to get those messages out there.

Bill Mealer: I just got back from a week in Washington DC working on wildlife issues. I met with the deputy director of F&W Services and spoke with him about our issues in Montana. The discussions centered around US Humaine Services. They are very "anti-humans on public land." 1% of their total income goes to animal shelters. 17% goes to pensions. Anti animal research, where every drug we take gets tested on mice. The northern snakehead fish - if you catch one on east coast you are required to kill them. They are vicious, but delicious. I bring this up because of pet stores. They are the most adaptable vicious fish, and can survive 4 days out of water. What are the potential dangers of pet stores? Owners get sick of them and take them out and let them go. Woods bison has finally been cleared to be released on public lands in Alaska. Wild sheep foundation came out with scholarships to fund research. Is there a limitation of range or genetic hardiness? Safari Club is getting ready to fund a study on wild sheep genes. Is there some gene that is missing? Can we select sheep with hardier genes to survive better?

Mike Dailey: Watershed meetings, weed shares, HD 393 and lack of access in that district. Landowners and ranchers have been selling hunting rights to outfitters. Some don't, and hunt themselves, but recognize that things are changing. Not enough block management in that area bc landowners can make more money selling rights to outfitters. How do we deal with the outfitter/hunting rights purchase issue?

Dave Gibson: Almost universal support for licensing fee changes. Maybe just not enough money, but more than enough time has elapsed since last change. Support shortened time period.

Norm Bishop: Hope FWP will tout nongame write off at the same time we're talking about increasing support for hunters and anglers.

Pat Flowers: There is some discussion about a non-consumptive wolf tag so those interested in contributing to the conservation of wolves without hunting them can support them.

Rick Grady: We need to get a clear understanding of those who have block management vs a conservation easement. The general public support block management. Support that residents aren't paying enough for licenses. Support shortened cycles. But there's an underlying tension

that large landowners will lock up their land. We need to get word out about public lands, block management, we need to clarify conservation easement and block management. We're affected by that.

Mike England: Has anyone seen the *Touching the Wild* documentary? Guy lives with wild herd of mule deer. Amazing. Befriends herd and lives with them, learns their personality. Big caution is that it will probably be harder to pull the trigger after watching this. Recurring comment on funding is that there needs to be more stake holders. Why does FWP get such a tiny sliver of the general fund when F&W is such a huge part of our economy? Public access – with new state lands program, public property should be just as accessible as private land. Catch and release – We do a fishing guide that is mainly geared toward visitors. We notice that a lot of the fishing guides that are pulling 20-30 fish out of the rivers don't realize the effect they have on the fish. They are careless with the fish. 80% survival. More educational opportunity for FWP.

Robin Cunningham: New catch and release ethic. Article in latest TU on this topic. Catch and release isn't just catch and release. New emphasis is never take them out of the water. Brad Castener has developed a new phone app where you can take a photo and get the weight from the photo. Probably 80% of fishermen practice catch and release. Guides are not the only ones, but we are the interface. Brad is promoting this ethic with major suppliers, Simms, Patagonia.

Katie Weaver: Clarification on stream access definitions. Comments that guide has a big gray area. Can we add this to future discussion? Role that department plays in trespassing? What about landowners that post private lands and private roads?

Wildlife Habitat Presentation, Richard Keigley

Elk Management/ Brucellosis in elk & fencing on private land, Howard Burt

Norm Bishop: Has anyone quantified how many elk are aborting in this area?

Howard Burt: With this surveillance project, they are implanting pregnant cows with radio bits. We can determine when the bit hits the ground if it was aborted or natural birth. We're radio collaring these animals so we know where they're going.

Harold Johns: How do you know when they abort?

Howard Burt: When they abort or give birth, the radio transmitter pops out and gives you a different signal. Technicians try to get there as soon as possible to gather the transmitter.

Bill Mealer: We (Safari Club) use giant pepper sprays that have a loud blast with hippos to keep them out of places we don't want them. That is a little less distasteful than lethal means.

Future meeting idea – look at surveillance area and meaning of seropositivity. Brucellosis is a nasty disease and hard to diagnose.

Harold Johns: After 100 elk are collared, what do they do?

Howard Burt: Collars last 3-5 years. Seropositive elk will be killed. In the Tobacco Roots – zero came back positive, which is outside DSA. That was part of the study plan.

Bill Mealer: Another meeting topic idea - Update on CWD. Developing a vaccine? What's the status?

Howard Burt: We just revised the old plan. We do surveillance, collect lymph nodes, brain stem from hunter kills, euthanized animals, especially in risk areas. It comes with a price, we're trying to target risk areas, like in eastern MT bordering Wyoming and places bordering areas in Canada. Only positive in MT was a number of years ago in a game farm.

Katie Weaver: With the lawsuit, does this mean we default to 2013 plan?

Howard Burt: No, this is the annual plan.

License and Funding Advisory Council recommendations and status

Harold Johns: I don't think anyone will complain about the raise in price.

Cale Christiensen: How much of the money FWP spends in a year goes to fishing vs. hunting? All reclamation, conservation costs come out of FWP?

Pat Flowers: I don't know the money figures off the top of my head. Conservation costs usually come from a number of different sources. Projects are handled by multiple agencies.

Mike England: How many users of state lands actually buy the state land recreation license?

Pat Flowers: Part of our enforcement funding actually comes from DNRC for state lands enforcement.

Block Management Audit

Ray Gross: Clarification on difference between block management and easements?

Pat Flowers: Every conservation easement that FWP purchases has a public access requirement. It's different than other organizations that purchase easements. Why would we then pay someone who has a conservation easement to allow hunting access? We pay block management participants to compensate them for the impact to their lands. We know there is no way we can compete with outfitters paying for access.

Howard Burt: It's important to remember that conservation easements that did have a block management contract were allowing much more access than their easement documents required.

David Gibson: How do you tell if there's a conservation easement and what does that mean?

Pat Flowers: I think they are compiled online?

Rick Grady: That's part of what Alan Charles is working on right now. This is coming up again with the EQC tomorrow. We have all these audits, and what comes out of them?

Potential for Grizzly Delisting

Pat Flowers: Grizzlies were delisted before, and then subsequently there were four lawsuits. Proposal is for delisting again in 2015.

Beaverhead and Big Hole five year review

Pat Flowers: Review of outfitter days, who outfits, provisions for public access and opportunity. We have a commitment to revisit them every five years.

Public Relation Strategy

David Gibson: It's good to have more "spots" on tv and radio for more PR. Is there a regular plan statewide as well as regional wide?

Andrea Jones: Yes, what I do is more geared to our region. I have a set schedule I've set up to share our news.

David Gibson: I haven't seen R3 on that Wardens show.

Sam Sheppard: We'll be joining it soon. FWP gets a lot of free advertising from them. We're going to try and add some things outside of the enforcement effort, such as successes in conservation.

Montana's Outdoor Legacy Foundation

Pat Flowers: This is the rebranding of the former Fish, Wildlife and Parks foundation. Even with the former name, they were a separate agency.

Norm Bishop: Invite all to Bruce Smith's program at the Lindley Center on Friday.

No public comment.

Mike England: On topic of PR. I get a lot of press releases, and Andrea – yours are good. Block management audit: I thought your responses and assessments were very sensible and sound, with exception of one- Access to state lands. I felt your response was tilted very heavily toward landowners and not very equitable to others involved. Basically says landowner has no obligation to provide access and we're not going to provide any pressure. I would not be able to support that position.

Pat Flowers: I don't have a great response but that was at the recommendation of our attorneys and DNRCs attorneys.

Pauline Murrill: Is that because of liability?

Pat Flowers: There is pretty good protection.

Mike England: There is a pretty ironclad law in the MT Constitution that protects landowners, public or private, from injuries sustained while recreating.

Pat Flowers: I just looked at this law, b/c we had a request from a landowner – what protection do I have if a hunter shoots from my property and shoots someone or something on someone else's property? I pushed to have that as part of our legislative package, but we're not going to carry it forward. Our legal counsel thinks the law is extensive enough, and there is a fair amount of fear from those that value that amount of protection, that it will get watered down.

Sam Sheppard: One additional light, we look at block management areas every year and reevaluate. What is the value for the sportsmen and women to have it in the program? If it was

put in at a time when there was accessible state land, that has a play in it. Any lands added are on their own merit.

David Gibson: How do I know which ones are leased?

Pat Flowers: Leasing doesn't mean it's excluded from the public.

Mike England: Discrepancy between FWP and MCA, that leases are not exclusive. MCA says lessee can post and exclude.

Pat Flowers: That's for grazing purposes, not for recreation.

Sam Sheppard: That is how Dome Mtn was set up, you can still go, you just have to notify the lessee.

Future Meeting Ideas:

Clarification on stream access definitions

Look at brucellosis surveillance area and meaning of seropositivity

Update on CWD

Next Meeting:

August 14, 2014

Feedback turned in from blue cards:

Dave Gibson:

Issues:

Licensing and funding advisory council report

Comments/Questions from your trap line:

Almost universal support for proposals (1 neutral). Especially to increase fees incrementally and simplifying process.

How many contacts did you speak with about this issue?

5-6

Richard Grady:

- Invitation from a member of the PL/PW council to speak what they are seeing, etc based on the work of the block management programs
- The funding issue of the department and appreciate the public involvement

- December meeting is good to invite the local legislators to the meeting in preparation for the 2015 legislative session
- FWP has a lot of issue and programs which the web site helps a lot in getting information out to folks. The recent emails to folks of local issues on EA's, etc is working.